

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

HANDOUT 7A-2

In this exercise (use a blank sheet of paper) you will recall a special kind of personal memory called a self-defining memory. A self-defining memory has the following attributes:

1. It is at least one year old.
2. It is a memory from your life that you remembered very clearly and that still feels important to you even as you think about it.
3. It is a memory about an important enduring theme, issue, or conflict from your life. It is a memory that helps explain who you are as an individual and might be the memory you would tell someone else if you wanted that person to understand you in a profound way.
4. It is a memory linked to other similar memories that share the same theme or concern.
5. It may be a memory that is positive or negative, or both, in how it makes you feel. The only important aspect is that it leads to strong feelings.
6. It is a memory that you have thought about many times. It should be familiar to you like a picture you have studied or a song (happy or sad) you have learned by heart.

To understand best what a self-defining memory is, imagine you have just met someone you like very much and are going for a walk together. Each of you is very committed to helping the other get to know the "Real You." You are not trying to play a role or to strike a pose. While, inevitably, we say things that present a picture of ourselves that might not be completely accurate, imagine that you are making every effort to be honest. In the course of the conversation, you describe a memory that you feel conveys powerfully how you have come to be the person you currently are. It is precisely this memory, which you tell the other person and simultaneously repeat to yourself, that constitutes a self-defining memory.

Using the rating scale from 0 = not at all to 6 = extremely, please indicate how you felt today in recalling and thinking about your memory. Please also indicate the vividness and importance of the memory and the approximate number of years ago the memory took place (to the nearest whole number). Please note that you should not put your age when the memory took place, but instead how many years ago it took place.

1. _____ Happy
2. _____ Sad
3. _____ Angry
4. _____ Fearful
5. _____ Surprised
6. _____ Ashamed
7. _____ Disgusted
8. _____ Guilty
9. _____ Interested
10. _____ Embarrassed
11. _____ Contemptful
12. _____ Proud

HANDOUT 7A-2 (*continued*)

Using the same 0 – 6 scale, please rate how vividly you recalled the memory and how important the memory is to you.

13. _____ Vivid

14. _____ Important

How many years ago did the memory take place?

15. _____ Years Ago

Questions to Consider About Your Self-Defining Memory

1. Is this memory connected to any important goals in your current life?
2. What might it tell you about a relationship that matters to you in your life?
3. Do you see connections of this memory to other similar memories in your life?
4. Does this memory capture an enduring theme or unresolved conflict in your life?

Source: Jefferson A. Singer, PhD. *Memories That Matter: How to Use Self-defining Memories to Understand and Change Your Life*. Reprinted by permission of the author.